

PUBLIC CHAPTER NO. 527

HOUSE BILL NO. 620

By Representatives Mike Turner, Moore, Hardaway, Eldridge

Substituted for: Senate Bill No. 1295

By Senators Harper, Marrero

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4; Title 5; Title 6 and Title 7, relative to adequate fire station facilities.

WHEREAS, most of the fire stations in use today were planned and built with a single-sex workforce in mind; and

WHEREAS, many of these buildings are now being used by a workforce that includes both women and men; and

WHEREAS, not surprisingly, this can result in inadequacies that are a source of inconvenience, discomfort, embarrassment, and friction for all concerned; and

WHEREAS, many fire departments have developed a variety of solutions to problems created by inadequate facilities, some of which are unsatisfactory and ineffective; and

WHEREAS, most fire stations must be upgraded to meet the needs of today's modern firefighting force; and

WHEREAS, firefighting is an extremely stressful profession and firefighters tend to work long hours; and

WHEREAS, under such stressful conditions harmony among all firefighters representing all walks of life, gender and race is exceptionally important to the effectiveness of the unit in the performance of their jobs; and

WHEREAS, every effort should be made to take into consideration the emotions and sentiments of both genders when making needed station upgrades; under no circumstances should the rights and privileges currently granted to either gender by a fire company or department be reduced or eliminated when up-grades are made; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4, Chapter 24, is amended by adding Sections 2 through 4 of this act as a new part.

SECTION 2. With respect to any fire station constructed after the effective date of this act each municipal or county fire department, and each volunteer fire department or company is encouraged to have separate restroom facilities, showers and locker rooms for men and women.

SECTION 3.

(a) Each municipal or county fire department, and each volunteer fire department or company, are urged to develop plans which, to the greatest extent possible, will create gender friendly conditions in existing facilities.

(b) The purpose of the plans is to identify which stations could be upgraded to accomplish a gender-friendly facility and identify which stations cannot be made gender-friendly due to space constraints, historical significance of the station, or other documented reasons why this could not be accomplished.

(c) Such plans, once developed, shall be made available upon request by the commission on firefighting personnel standards and education and from interested persons in the community.

SECTION 4. Existing facilities which cannot be upgraded to gender-friendly stations should be made gender-friendly to the greatest extent possible by:

(1) Using empty or unused rooms in the station; in no event shall existing rooms, including but not limited to bedrooms, weight rooms, T.V. rooms, or other rooms utilized by the firefighters for relaxation or rest, be taken or redesignated for purposes of complying with this act;

(2) With regard to restrooms, shower rooms or locker rooms, using a male/female flip sign with locks on the door when the room is being utilized by either a male or female; no restroom, shower room or locker room which is designated specifically for male or female may be used at anytime by the opposite sex;

(3) With respect to sleeping arrangements created for the purpose of complying with this act, if it is not possible to have individual sleeping quarters, privacy for everyone shall be provided by installing individual cubicles in a room or rooms designated for sleeping with a curtain or screen blocking the entrance to each individual cubicle. Each such cubicle shall contain at least a bed, desk, lamp and a sufficient number of lockers to provide each firefighter on a shift a designated, private area to rest or sleep.

SECTION 5. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.

PASSED: June 12, 2007



JIMMY NAIFEH, SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



RON RAMSEY
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE

APPROVED this 26th day of June 2007



PHIL BREDESEN, GOVERNOR